

GREAT POETS ARE A CEMENTING FORCE

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May paddy grow and gold (mining) increase,
May fields produce more and alm takers come,
May cow wealth increase and so also oxen,
May all enemies get defeated and priests recite,
May hungry disappear and disease vanish,
May the king have no enemies and long live,
May dharma grow and adharma decline,
May governance be according to rules and there be no theft,
May goodness increase and badness decrease,
May rains be plenty and fertility increase.

These lines are not any translation of Sanskrit verses taken from Vedas or Upanishads, but taken from the first ten poems of **Ingurunuru** in the same order as they are available ¹

INTRODUCTION

Indian poets have always had national outlook in their expression, while dealing with any subject. Even vernacular poems of different languages and regions reflect the fact. The same trend is noticed in the more than 5000 years or more old Sangam literature ². How Tamil poets exhibited such feature in their ancient Tamil literature or "Sangam literature" as popularly known is discussed here. Tamil poets, for that matter any poet, have always been dynamic, visiting many places, meeting different people and enjoying and appreciating nature. Thus their imagination is influenced by and refined with the factors of culture, civilization, heritage, tradition and other social aspects. The concepts of sovereignty, nation, state, polity, territory, kingdom and economic factors are also interwoven and interconnected with the above mentioned factors.

THE NATURE OF SANGAM POETS

The Sangam poets do not belong to the same period, same region or religion, caste or creed, profession or avocation etc. Belonging to both sexes, there were Anthanar, Arasar, Vanigar, Velalar; Mathematician, Astrologist, Musician poets; with different names derived upon their physical characters, profession and the characteristic expression used in their poems. Thus, the poems (actually collection of poems) also belong to different periods ³ reflecting culture, tradition, heritage and civilization of people, kings and societies. However, as there has been a common element found among such different factors, it is evident that they had a common nation, polity and economy.

THE LAND WHERE THEY LIVED

The Sangam poets have had a clear idea of the land where they lived, though they have not named it in their literature. Its boundaries are clearly and repeatedly mentioned as follows, Imayam in the North, Kumari in the South, eastern ocean in the East and western ocean in the West. The specific references are discussed as follows:

In the North is there the highest mountain covered with snow, in the South the terrific Kumari flowing, in the East the waves hitting the shores and in the West the old ocean. And there are land, sky and cosmos (**Puram.6:1-7**). Thus, the poet not only describes the boundaries of the land where he lives, but also goes beyond it with universal outlook to cover the entire world and beyond.

Cheraman, Yanaikkansey, Mantharajeral, Irumporai rules the land with justice and peace, which is surrounded by southern mountain (range), northern big mountain, eastern ocean and western ocean (**Puram. 17: 1-2**) and it is with hills, mountains, forests and cities/places (13-14).

If the sky-high Himalayas in the North and **Ay Andiran** in the South were not there, this vast land of the world would get destroyed (**Puram. 132:7-9**).

The boundaries of the land are : southern Kumari, northern big mountain, eastern ocean and western ocean (**Madu.70-71**).

Kings and the learned coming from different parts of the land, which is surrounded by conch sounding cold southern ocean, eastern ocean and western ocean

(**Padit.51.14-15**). Though direction is not mentioned, a big mountain is mentioned before this description in the same poem (13) implying Imayam.

Kovur Kizhar describes how the salt produced was distributed and sold throughout the land (**Puram.386.15-17**). As the four boundaries follow in the same poem (20-23), it is confirmed. The planet Venus would be there for ever, whether we move from East to West or West to East, North to South or South to North, as the land is ruled by **Cholan Kulamutrattunjiya Killivalavan**.

Even in migration of birds, the unity of the land or the extent of it upto Himalayas is meticulously recorded as follows by **Pisirandaiyar**. He sends message through "**Annaseval**" (Swan): ".....after having a feast of **Ayirai** (a small fish) in the river Kumari, if you fly towards the northern mountain (**vada malai**), there will be Chola kingdom in between.....". Northern mountain is implied as Himalayas (**Puram.67:6-7**).

CHAKRAVARTHI-KSHETRA

It is well known that the Indians had the concept of a "Chakravarthi-Kshetra" i.e, the sphere of influence of an Indian imperial ruler covering the whole of the ancient Bharat or greater India or ancient India. Actually the king or ruler need not have conquered all the areas of India, however, in inscriptions, it is mentioned that he was ruling his desa/country with such traditional boundaries. Kautilya's **Arthashastra** describes it as bounded in the North by Himavat and in the South by the ocean (the

southern or Indian ocean) and Rajasekhara's **Kavya-mimasa** gives its northern and southern boundaries respectively as Bindusaras, which is located in the Himalayas and Kumaripuri or Cape Comorin in the South. Like this may literary and epigraphic records mention either Indian ocean, Cape Comorin, Mahendragiri, the Sethu, Suvela, Simhala-dvipa or the Malaya mountain as the southern boundary of India as pointed out by D.C. Sircar.⁴ The concept of "Chakravarti" was prevalent as early as 570 B.C. and Buddha adopted the concept for his "Dharmachakra".⁵

Here, one can easily notice that the same concept ingrained in the minds of the ancient Tamil poets is reflected in their poems. That is why the boundaries of the land match with the epigraphical evidences of the later period.

Though, the modern scholars differ about the conquest of the northern India by the Tamil Kings, particularly, fixing their flags on the top of Himalayas with their royal insignia, the repeatedly appearing such references obviously are in consonance with the above "Chakravarthi-Kshetra" concept and their attempt to identify and compete with north-Indian Kings, as they used to describe themselves so.

DIFFERENT PEOPLE GROUPS

The Tamilagam (probably the entire South upto Vindhyas) was ruled by Chera, Chola and Pandya kings. The following communities/tribes (**kudis**) come under their rule - **Kudavar, Kuttuvar, Adhiyar, Udhiyar, Malaiyar, Mazhavar, Maravar, Ilaiyar, Pozhiyar, Villor,**

Kongar and Kuuavar and those who did not come are **Paradhavar, Kosar, Aviyar, Oviyar, Velir, Aruvar, Andar and Idaiyar**. Those who lived on the boundaries of Tamilagam i.e. on the northern side are **Tondaiyar, Tiraiyar, Kalavar, Vadugar, Ariyar and Moriyar**. The foreign and alien groups are **Yavanas**. But, what is surprising is except foreigners, all communities were considered as citizens of their place or nation without any discrimination. The Puranas give similar groupings with different names. A separate study has to be made to identify the similarity of the groups.

Though, many non-Tamilian groups have been mentioned, they were not considered as foreigners and aliens, obviously as they were having the same or common culture, tradition, heritage and civilization. At the same time, foreigners and aliens have been mentioned with their characteristic features differentiating them from the natives of the land. Aryan king Bragaduttann learns Tamil and music from Tamils. Though "**Ariyar**", "**Tamizh**", "**Parppar**" etc have been mentioned, "Dravidians", "Dravidam", "Brahmin" not mentioned!. This again clearly proves the total absence of racial discrimination or considering people as aliens based on skin colour.⁶

TAMILAGAM

As far as the Tamilagam is concerned, the description of boundaries are very specific - all the three sides (East, West and South) by oceans and the North by the big/highest/northern mountain (implying Vengada malai). Sometimes, it is mentioned that the southern side boundary as Kumarikodu (mountain)/Kumari river/Kumari

nadu. References are also there to describe that the ancient Tamilagam once was surrounded by sea waters on all four sides (**Puram.3:2**, implying Navalantivu or Jambudvipa) ⁷.

RAMAYANIC, MAHABHARAT AND PURANIC REFERENCES

There are many examples copiously found to be used to compare in their poetic alligorism. Unless the Tamil poets had such convention and tradition of incorporating such common elements or their minds were not attracted towards them with all their learning and experience, they would not have mentioned. Only few examples are given for illustrative purpose and not exhaustive:

Kalittogal

The burning down of the three aerial cities by Siva (1), plans of Duryodhana to kill the Pandavas in the palace of lac (25), the battle between Lord Muruga and Surapadma (27), Ravana lifting Mount Kailas (38), Bhima beating Duryodhana on the thigh (52), Kannan killing the wrestlers sent by Kamsa (42, 134), the tearing of the breast of Dussasana by Bhima (101), Siva throttling Yama (101), Asvattama killing Sikandi who killed Drona (sic) (101), Kannan killing the demon who came in the form of a horse (103), Kannan who hid the sun by his disc and then releasing it (104), Kama born as the son of Surya (108), the information regarding Urvasi and Tilottama (109), the story of Yayati (139), Siva bearing the Ganges in his locks (150).

Paripadal

Agaligai transforming into a stone, drinking of **amrut** by Devas, jumping of

Rakshasas into the ocean, drying of ocean by drinking it up by Vishnu transforming into a swan, protection of the Himalayas by Indra, cursing of Indra, burning of Tripura by Shiva, churning of the ocean, rescue of Vinathai by Garuda, Urvasi taking the form of a horse, humbling of Garuda's pride by Vishnu, bringing of Ganges to earth by Brahma.

Youthful sports of Krishna taking away the clothes of the Gopis on the banks of the Jamuna (59), of Muruga vanquishing Suran (70), of Parasurama destroying the line of kings (220).

Agananuru (70:13-17) gives the following information, which is not found in the Valmiki Ramayana: Rama was discussing the strategy with his warriors under a banyan tree on the shores of the southern ocean at the ancient and oldest tip of the land (**Tonmudukodi**, implying Dhanushkodi). At that time, as the birds in the tree created noise disturbing their discussion, Rama silenced them by raising his hand.

Purananuru (378.18-21) Compares the act of the wife of a poet, who tries to wear different ornaments and jewels of Sita, who dropped purposely, while she was taken away by Ravana by force. Both categories try to wear finger-rings in the nose, nose-ring in the finger, belt around the neck, neck... lace around the waist and so on, as they were never used to have such ornaments and jewels.

Maduraikkanchi (40-41) gives the following information: The oldest God residing at the hill drove the Tennavan away from the place. The commentators imply that the oldest God is Agstya rishi, the hill Podigai, Tennavan is Ravana and the place Tamilagam or South India.

Tolkappiyar (Tol. Porul.80) mentions Mayon, the Black one was the God of Mullai region.

Murijiyur Mudinaganar mentions that **Perunchotru Udhayan Cheraladhan** provided food for both the warring armies of Ivar the Five, implying the Pandavas) and Iraimpadinmar (the Hundred, implying Kauravas (**Puram.1:13-15**).

DIFFERENT DEYAMS

The word "deyam" used in the Sangam literature denotes the following meanings:

1. **nadu** = country or nation. A political entity.
2. **idam** = place or location.
3. **thisai** = direction
4. **ur** = village, settlement or township.
5. **kal** = toddy

The heroes are seen going to different "deyams" (places parting their ladies-love or wives to trade and earn. How different languages were spoken in those places is also mentioned * They had to cross wild forests mountainous areas and scorching deserts facing lot of dangers. This clearly shows that all those places should have been familiar to them, in spite of the languages spoken and dangers faced.

In fact, **Kazhattalaiyar** (**Puram.62:10**) mentions as to how different language speaking soldiers participated in a battle fought between Chera and Chola kings. The fact that they fought and died in the Tamilagam for Tamil kings is to be noted carefully to appreciate. **Kadiyalur Ruttirankannanar** describes the cosmopolitan status of Kaveripumpattinam where many language speaking people coming from different places live together happily (**Patti.216-17**).

DIFFERENT TOWNS, CITIES MENTIONED

Names of different villages, towns and cities of India, particularly of Tamilagam have been mentioned. The examples given are only for illustrative purposes and not exhaustive.

Natrinai : Ambar (141), Arkkadu (190:6: 227:6), Alanganam (387), Urandai (400), Unur (300), Kandavayil (38), Kudanthaivayil (379), Kuttuvan Kudavarai (105), Konkanam (391), Saykkadu (73), Thondi a port of the Chera (8:9: 18, 195), Param (260), Poraiyaru (131:8), Iruppai (260), Korkkai (23), Maranthai (35, 395), Mullur (170, 291), Thondi filled with noise of sea-birds 195:5, seaside towns Manthai 35, il, Marungur, a Pandyan port (258:10: 358:9)

Puram:llangai (**Puram.379:6**); Nallur (389:10);

Nadu: Another word used to denote place, town (**ur**), city or region coming under the domain of a chieftain, feudatory, king or ruler is "nadu" (8). "Nadu" has been used to denote in a unique way to bring out its meaning. In Natrinai, **nadu** and **ur** are used together (377 :1) to show that **nadu** is bigger than **ur**. **Purananuru** too points out this by mentioning Vengada nadan and Karumban uran (**Puram.381:22, 26**). A poet is mentioned to have been going to **nadus** at distant places (**Puram.377:14**), in that context, the **nadu** of Rajasuyam Vetta Perunarkilli Cholan as superior to other **nadus** (377:21). From the above discussion, it is evident that **deyam** is bigger than **nadu**, **nadu** is bigger than **Ur** and so on.

Mountains, Rivers mentioned:

Mountains and rivers have been mentioned and described without any restrictive ideology.

Mountains mentioned are Imayuam (**Puram.2:24:** 39:14-15; 369:24; Nat.356:3), Vengadam, Kuthirai, Kudamalai, Kudavarai, Pothiyam (**Puram.2:24**),

The rivers mentioned in the Sangam literature are Kaveri, Vaigai, Ayiriyaru, Anporunai, Porunai, Periyaru, Arisilaru, Kumari, Silambaru, Kalliyam Periyaru, Seyaru, Pakhruli, Pennai, Vani, Kangai, Sonai.

While Gangai (Ganges) is mentioned only 9 times, Kaveri 34 times showing the importance of South to them than north.

Gangai: Gangai, the Ganges river has been specifically mentioned with all its known characteristics:

All living things throng to the Ganges filled with waters flowing (**Puram. 161.5-8**).

The Ganges originates from the Himalayas. Senguttuvan after defeating the northern kings orders them to carry the stones quarried by the Himalayas and washed with the waters of Ganges (**Padit.Padi.5:2-7**). Imaiavar, the rishis reside by the side of reddish Himalayas and the river gold producing Ganges flows there (**Peru.429-431**)

Ships coming from different places pass through the very big river Ganges and reach sea waters implying a port situated at the

mouth of the river, where it reaches sea (**Madu.694-697**).

The produce (of areas on the banks) of the Ganges is brought to Kaveripumpattinam for trade (**Pattina.190**).

Famous and proud Nanadas with Pandali (Padaliputra city), who were well versed in warfare had once hidden wealth under the banks of the Ganges (**Agam.265:4-6, 23**).

The Ganges river is crossed or travelled through with ships/boats) **vangam, Natri.189:4-6**). The Ganges river is filled with waters falling through a whitish-fall from the highest Himalayas, as if falling from the skies (**Natri.369:7-11**).

Originating from the highest mountains, Ganges falls like a waterfall uprooting trees and then decorating with flowers flow, as if falling from the sky (**Pari.16:32-38**).

The geography of the ancient Tamils is thus restricted to Bharath and particularly ancient Tamilagam or South India in the context.

TAMIL AND OTHERS

The internal evidence point to the fact that Tamils refer to the Andhras as Vadugar and their language Vadugu, living beyond the ancient Tamilagam with prominent Vengada hills (**Agam.213**). The name Vadugu (**vadakku**) denotes North and hence Vadugar means the people who lived in the North. The expression "Vadavadugar" has also been used specifically (**Puram.378.2**) to differentiate from Vadaugar living in the South. A certain section of people of Kamataka were also known as Vadagar. During the Sangam period, Kannada

language had not been developed and hence they were clubbed either with Tamils or Andhras depending upon their geographical location. They were living and ruling the northern areas beyond Tamilagam.

The poets while describing about crossing the areas by Tamils for trade and business purposes mention it as "deyam", "mozhipeyar deyam" and so on. A name of a Vaduga king is mentioned as "Erumai" (**Agam.115.5**, meaning Buffalo). His ruling area has a river Ayiri and those who go beyond Tamilagam have to cross it (**Agam.253, 18-21**). Moriyar i.e., Mauryas, during their campaign in the South had to cross the Vadugadeasam and the Vadugar, probably joined with Moriyar after their 298, Perunchenni, a Chola king killed a new Vaduga king (Vamba Vadugar, **Puram.375:14**) (**Puram.378**). Thus, it is evident that the poets had a definite idea about the ancient Tamilagam.

This differentiation of Tamilagam into different areas or political entities could have been developed only after the fullfledged development of the languages, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam, as before that it was common to all kings. The expression "**tantamizhpodu**" denotes the cold land common (cold, because it is surrounded by waters on all four sides, when it was an island, and three sides, when it was attached to/collided with the Asian continent) Tamilnadu (**tantamizhpodu, Puram.51:5**) is common (to all three kings - the Chera, Chola and Pandyas). The reference "**Nilavukkadal varaippu**" (**Puram.3:2**) also brings out the fact. A certain part of the ancient Tamilagam was submerged, as is

evident from many references. The Pakhruli mentioned is not found in the later period literature. However, Silappatikaram records that the land with the Pakhruli river was submerged. Indirect reference is found in certain expression like "**kadalkolappadathu**" (**Puram.122:1**), i.e, the land of Malayaman Tirumudikkari was not taken away by the sea, implying that land of other or some kings, probably that of Pandyans was submerged under sea/oceanic waters.

NATIONAL TRADE

The fact that goods and merchandise were freely brought from one place to another and even bartered is evident from many examples. Well established markets and market places (streets specifically allotted) prove the organised trade and business practices of a political state. The sandal of northern mountain (**Puram.380:2;**) is mentioned; special type of granite is brought from the north for making idols; salt is traded throughout the country. **Pattinapalai** records the national and even international trade conducted in the port of Kaveripumpattinam. According to its description, the streets of Kaveripumpattinam are filled with horses coming across seas, pepper across land, diamonds and Gold from the Himalayas, sandal and Aquila (agil) from western mountain, pearls from southern ocean, corals from eastern ocean, goods from (the areas) of Ganges, produces (of the areas) of Kaveri, food products from Ezham (Ceylon), goods from Kazhagam (Burma) and other rare goods (from other places). Therefore, one can notice even in the commercial context how the boundaries of the land are recorded meticulously covering

probably the greater India. This clearly proves the existence of the concept of one nation, though its name is not mentioned.

The Yavanas' ships which sailed on Sulliyam, a Chera river, with laden gold. Arriving at Musiri, they exchanged gold with the bags of pepper (**Agam.**149:9-11).

The ships sailing on the waters appeared as world on the rolling waters implying the size of them (**Agam.**255:1-2).

Salt was carried in bullock carts (**Perum.**65-66) and Pepper on the backs of asses to different places for trade (**Perum.**78-80).

Ships of various countries sailed into ports (**Nat.**293). The bazars are known "niyamam" (**Nat.**45). Merchants travelled far North on boats on the Ganges (**Nat.**189).

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Archaeological evidences available and foreign accounts⁹ prove that India, particularly, southern ports had established trade links with other countries. The Indian spices (like pepper), medicine (like herbs and ointments - Ammonum, Nardum, Cinnamon, Malabathrum, Kostos, Calamus Aromaticum, Agallocha), perfumed articles (like sandal), Ivory, Peacock, Monkey etc were very famous in the ancient world. There are many items, which have been characteristically named as Indian corn (maize), Indian fig (Banyan tree), Indian hemp, Indian rubber, Indigo (the pigment from India) etc. As such goods were traded across the oceans for many years, particularly through Indian ocean, India, still

has the credit of having the ocean named after her and known as such since time immemorial.

The fourth king of Asiriya Salmanesar (772-722 B.C.) was gifted with Indian elephants. An Indian settlement was also found to have been flourished there.

The palace of Nebuzethnesar (604-562 B.C) at Pimummurath had pillars of Indian teak.

A Jataka mentions about the task of taking a peacock across the ocean by the Indian merchants (No.339, Jataka.iii, the Cambridge edition).

During the period of the first and second Hebrew kings, rice and Sandal were imported from India in Babylon (6,7 and 8th cent.B.C).

A delegation was sent by a Pandyan king to Greek Augustus in 20 B.C.

Therefore, the first Indian merchants must have gone there to sell their products, then, the foreigners must have come to India to have direct trade with Indians. This again proves the ship building and seafaring capability of the ancient Indians. The Greek and Roman connection proves the fact. It is also intriguing to note that while Roman coins are found in India, no Indian coins are found or reported from the ancient traded countries. As the foreign accounts mention the traders only as "Indians", it is evident that India was a single political entity even in those days. In fact, all their maps show only India with important places¹⁰ Trade is connected with tax and duties levied and collected by the government.

TAXATION

Tax is a compulsory transfer of goods, services or money from private individuals or citizens, institutions or groups to the political state or government. In the ancient India or Bharat and also in the Tamilagam, tax is collected at the rate of one-sixth by the kings (**Puram**. 17:6-7). According to Manu, the rate of tax is one-fiftieth for the profit accrued from goods and cows, one eighth or sixth or twelfth for the produce depending upon the nature of the land (**Manu**. VII. 130). The other Sanskrit references are as follows:

"The one-sixth Bali tax, import and export duties, fines and forfeitures collected from offenders—gathered in accordance with the Sastras (law and constitution), as your wages (**Vetanena**), shall constitute your revenue" (**Mahabharata, Shanti-Parva**, LXXI.10).

Both the customary receipts of a king and what is called the sixth of the produce of the soil, form the royal revenue, the reward for the protection of his subjects (**Narada**, XVIII.48, Jolly's translation).

Hereafter, the parallel Sanskrit references are given after the references of Sangam literature.

Here, obviously it is implied by the commentators that it was one-sixth of the produce, though the rate is not specifically mentioned. The word "**paduvathu**" has the specific meaning of "what was due to government". Some scholars have been reluctant to accept the influence of Manu¹¹. But, definitely, the implied rate is inspired by Manu and other Sanskrit works as is evident from the other internal evidences as explained below.

Just because, one has come to power for ruling by way of hereditary right, he should not tax his citizens (**kudi puravu**) heavily, otherwise, there is no meaning in his right of ruling with burden of protecting his subjects (**Puram**.75:4-5). The tax collected with the pleasure of the people should be for the welfare of his citizens and himself (**Manu**.VIII.128).

The learned ruler should levy tax fully understanding the rules or canons of taxation, then only people would work hard and produce crores of worth of goods. This is lucidly explained by the following example. Even though, one is having a small land of one "ma" (measuring 10x10x2.5 = 25,000 Cu. ft), if the produced paddy from it is used economically, it can be used to feed an elephant for many days. But, if the elephant itself enters the paddy field of 100 seru measure and starts eating, most of the paddy would get destroyed under its feet than going into the mouth. Similarly, if the despot ruler taxes according to his whims and fancies or according to the advice of his coterie (including ministers and sycophants), he cannot get anything not only for himself (state treasury) but also for his world (citizens) (**Puram**.184). As most of the tax collected would go to the coterie than to the government, the welfare and economy of the society would be in shambles. The king should collect tax carefully after much thinking for the welfare and common cause of the society and happiness of himself and his citizens (**Manu**.VII.128). He should collect tax in small quantities just like leech collects blood, calf drinks milk and bee collects honey (129). The rate of tax is one-

fiftieth for the profit accrued from goods and cows, one-eighth or - sixth or - twelfth for the produce depending upon the nature of the land.(130). Protection of citizens is the prime virtue/duty (**aram**) of a king. The collection of tax according to norms is also a virtue (144).

A village/town head does not have to pay tax (**puravu**), but he prepares to give gifts to poets (**Puram.330:6-7**). As very often, gold, jewels, elephants, horses, chariots, villages and other valuables were given as gifts, grants and boons, there might be a possibility of impost on such presents. As it could not be collected from the receivers, probably, it was collected from the donors. That is the situation expressed in the poem (**varip puravirku atra**). Here, **puravu** might be a form of "gift tax" to be paid by the chieftains and feudatories to the king. In those days, villages were offered as tax-free grant. While small villages were offered to poets, bigger ones might be offered to soldiers (**Puram.297:5**)

The way through which goods laden vehicles come out was protected by armed guards (**Perum.80-82**). The lying in goods at the port was protected by the duty collectors (**Pattin.116-125**). They were known as "**Tollisait tozhil makkal**" (**Pat.118**). Import duty was collected by the officials at Kaveripumpattinam for the goods coming across the oceans (**Pat.183-85, 210-13**).

Hence one can notice that the tax or duty is always connected with the duty of tax collector or ruler.

Unless the rulers were familiar with the national happenings and the tax structure, they would not have followed the same and poets or commentators would not have recorded in their works. Therefore, it is evident that such uniformity of tax rate could have been prevalent only because of the single political entity of Bharat.

Moreover, the rules or canons of taxation followed in the ancient Bharat exactly coincides with the modern concept¹².

CYCLIC NATURE OF BIRTH AND DEATH ETC.

Kaniyan Pungundranar says, "**Yadhum ure, yavarum kelir**" (**Puram.192:1**) meaning "Every place is my place and all are my relatives" and then goes on to philosophical musings. The philosophical concepts like karma, rebirth, transient nature of life etc clearly prove the common learning or unified consciousness of the poets to have such thought and thinking processes:

The growing and waning moon teaches even to illiterate that the born is dead and the dead born again (**Puram.27:11-14**).

There are many men who died even without leaving their name and they are not considered as human beings. But, those who did good deeds are considered so, as they have left their name, even though, the mortal body has gone (**Puram.24:26-28**).

People should do good deeds for their goodness of the next life, but it should not be in such a way as a business man does in expectation of profit (**Puram.134:1-2**).

There is nothing new in the death for the born as it is decided with the development of the foetus. (**Puram** 192:3-4).

The Creator has bestowed man with the cyclic nature of birth and death. And those who know this fact will do good things to break the chain. (**Puram** 194:5-7)

Raining and producing (of food) are continuous and periodical processes essential for the existence of life. Both are not stopped, just because, it rained or food produced last period. So also birth and death in the life (**Puram**.203:1-3)

For good deeds done, one may go to heavens, where the cyclic nature of birth and death is not there. Therefore, one should die with fame, that is imperishable, but with body (That is perishable) by doing goodness during his lifetime (**Puram**.214:10-12).

The kings who ruled the common land of "three kings" have gone. Their wealth disappeared without going along with them. Only dharma accrued out of their good deeds go with them. Therefore, one should do dharma only when he is alive and living with his family (**Puram**.357).

The great kings have ultimately reached the crematory grounds. Though their body has perished, the unperishable is their fame (**Puram** 359:9,16-17)

Innumerable kings like the sands of the ocean ruled this land, but all have gone (dead) as the oceanic waters deposit and take back the sand. Therefore, none can live with this body. Death for everybody is the reality of life (**Puram**.363.1-10).

Tolkadan (**Padit**.70:20-22), **Tolvinai** (**Nat**.88:1-2), **Tolvinaippayan** (**Kali**.1-4), etc prove the prevalence of the concept of Karma among the Tamils.

These ideas are consonant with any poet of Bharat of any part, irrespective of his status, language, creed, caste etc., proving the underlying thought running through their minds and such thinking developed and nurtured by their education and experience. As human beings differ due to hereditary and environmental factors, the unanimity of mind noticed is unique and this goes to establish the cementing force existing.

The poets are always seen to be preventing wars, acting as ambassadors and uniting kings and peoples using their good offices.

TRAVELLING

The movement people, poets, traders and goods from one place to another from South to North and North to South clearly proves that there was no restriction about their citizenship, trading and business. In fact, as has already been mentioned for earning, the Tamils used to travel to many places. People going to different cities, towns and places for festivals and pilgrimage is also mentioned. The fact that "Narandhai" or lemon grass was found to be growing in the Himalayas and Gangetic plains as recorded in the Sangam literature proves the familiarity of the poets. Thus, the whole of Bharat was known to poets at least in the 6th to 4th cent. B.C.

SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Marriages were performed after matching important factors of both girl and boy ¹⁴.

During marriage, the practice of tying Tali was there ¹⁵ Begetting children was considered as the consummation of marriage. Education was given both to men and women, rich and poor, higher or lower status in the society. Women committed Sati, when their husbands died. Women removed Talis and bangles after the death of their husbands. Those who did not want to commit Sati, followed **Kaimmai nonbu**. It involves shaving off hair, eating tasteless food, sleeping on floor etc. From birth to death Samskaras like ritulas (Karanams) were followed. Dead were remembered and last rites (**pitir kadan**) performed with offering of **pindams** (rice balls) (**Puram**.234:2-4; 249:12-14; 360:17-20; 363:10-14). The southern direction was given importance and respected.

Cows were respected and used as an indicator of wealth in the society. In fact, the word "**madu**" means wealth and "**ma**" denotes a measure and as well as cow or cattle in the Sangam literature. Killing of cows and eating of beef were considered as sin. Yagnas, including Rajasuyam (it was performed only after conquering all parts of Bharat or if all other kings accepted his sovereignty) were performed by the kings indicate that such significance was known to the poets.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND OTHER EVIDENCES

There are many archaeological evidences to prove the single political entity of Bharat. Sir Alexander Cunningham placed the coinage of India about 1000 B.C. The Khavaravela inscription indicates the date of the Mahabharat war about c.1425 B.C.

though the traditional date is 3102 B.C. The usages of punch mark coins and the Brahmi script used to write different languages in inscriptions, Asokan inscriptions, pilgrimage conducted from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari are some of the direct examples. Even in the worship of popular Gods and Goddesses, the places are situated throughout India. Asokan script found throughout India proves the fact.

Again, the movement of salt and pepper produced at different parts of the land and sea water was moved and traded in different parts proves the unity and integrity of the nation in those days. Salt is the basic ingredient of food and therefore, this also proves that all other items were also brought and sold throughout India. The migration of birds, types of flora grown at different parts had been carefully noted by the poets proving their knowledge of the country, where they lived. The list of kings found (Cheras, Cholas, Pandyas, Andhras) in the Sanskrit literature and traditional 56 kings ¹⁷ prove the role of Tamil kings in the history of India. Not only north Indian kings, but south Indian kings have also colonised other parts of the world in the development of Greater India across the seas (this may be one of the reasons for the much distorted and bigger size of India or Indians as depicted by the Greek geographers). Therefore, all details must have been known to the poets, otherwise they could not have incorporated such details in their poems.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the Tamil poets had a national vision as explained above. The unified geographical, philosophical, religious,

cultural, traditional factors amply prove the political entity and unity of Indian nation in those days. Government was definitely there during the Sangam period as evidenced by the existence of Muvendar (three kings), Mannar (monarchs under Muvendar), chieftains, feudatories and other heads), Asokan inscriptions references to South Indian kingdoms, Karavela's defeat of the confederation of Tamil kings, the traditional list of 56 kings ruling different parts of India.

The sovereignty is proved by the concept of one nation and Chakravarti kshetra. The territory and boundaries of such political State have been consistently defined.

The existence of chieftains, feudatories, kings, emperor and tribute paid by them to higher authorities also prove the fact.

The details of defence, armed and other forces, and the description about agriculture, business, trade, commerce, industries, national and international trade, taxation etc supplement the existence of State.

As poets have faithfully recorded all the details, definitely they are the cementing force for India for all ages.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Ingurunuru. The second line of first ten poems.
2. The existence of Sangam and date of sangam are disputable among scholars. The Sangam period is placed between 500 B.C. and 500 A.D. or 300 B.C. and 300 A.D. Therefore, definitely, the poems forming the literature belong not only to this period, but also earlier.

3. The syntax and geographical details found in such poems prove that they are datable to the earliest period of the collection.

4. D.C.Sircar, "Ramayana in Inscriptions" — Ramayana Traditions in Asia, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1980, pp.331-332.

5. K.P.Jayaswal, "Hindu Polity", The Bangalore Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd., Bangalore, 1967, p.348.

6. K.V.Ramakrishna Rao, "Ariyar in the Ancient Tamil Literature", PIHC, Calcutta, 1990, p.165. pp 75-80. "The Aryan Problem", (Ed S.B.Deo), BISS Pune 1993, pp 38-45. "The Dravidian Problem," P.B.I.S.S, Iwarangal, 1992.

7. The word "Tamil means —

1. tamizh = the Tamil language (puram.50:9-10; 58.12-13; Pari.6:60);

2. tamizhppadai = the Tamil army (Puram.19:1-4); and

3. tamzih nadu = the Tamil area (A g a m . 2 2 7 : 1 3 - 1 7) . Panambanar in his introductory poem to Tolkappiyam says that the chaste Tamil was spoken in the area or land lying between Vadavengadam and Tenkumari. Thus, though as far as "Tamizh" is concerned, their jurisdiction was restricted, but when the unmentioned Bharat came, their poetic imagination spread to cover it.

8. Pat.216-218; Agam.31:14-15; 67:12; 211:7-8; 295:15-17; Kurun.11:5-7; Inguru.321.4.

9. Nadu (Puram.377:21); Vizhavudai nadu (Puram.381:5); Vengada nadan (Puram.381:22)

Seynadu = distant place (Nat.43:4; 271:4; 302:6; 384:6; Puram. 377:14),

Kanaganadu = forest place (Nat.47:6; 115:8),

malainadu = hilly place (Nat.158:9; 168:6; 232:6),

kalnadu,
perungainadu = place with big mountain (Nat. 125:12; 233:3),

kundranadu = place with mountain (Nat.114:6; 165:5; 217:5),

varainadu = place with mountain (Nat.225:5),

peruvarainadu = hilly place (Nat. 147:6)

varaiyaganadu = place surrounded by hills/mountains (Nat. 122:6; 334:5),

tamnadu = one's own place (Nat. 183:11),

piranadu = place of other (Nat. 183:2),

palnadu = many places (Nat. 295:5)

10. Kennedy, "They Early Commerce of Babylon with India", J.R.A.S,

1898. Warmington, "Commerce between Roman Empire and India", pp.192-193. Scoff, "Periplus of the Erythraen Sea", New York, 1912, pp.121-122, 171. J.R.A.S, London, 1917, p.237.

H.G.Rawlinson, "Intercourse Between India and the Western World", Cambridge, 1916.

11. H.F. Tozer, "A History of Ancient Geography", Ess Publications, New Delhi, 1975.

Hecataeus (c.420 B.C. — India has been depicted as the mirror image of Arabia with Indus flowing from north to south, map facing p.71),

Herodotus (443 B.C. — a semi-circular south with Indus flowing from north to south, map facing p.75),

Strabo (c.63 B.C. — a rhombus shaped India with Indus and Ganges flowing on two sides in the north, map facing p.239),

Ptolemy (c.150 A.D. — much distorted India or two India, India cis Gangem with much bigger Tabrobane (Sri Lanka) and India trans Gangem with continous land mass, map facing p.341).

12. Scholars like N.Subramanian have wondered that no such specific reference about the rate one sixth is appearing anywhere in the

Sangam literature and the later writers and commentators would have mentioned it so thinking of contemporary or of the rate suggested by Manu (Sangam Polity, Ennes Publications, Madurai, 1980, p.212).

13. Adam Smith in his "Wealth of Nations" (Book V, Chap.2) propounded the following rules or canons of taxation:

1. Equality - the tax should be levied and collected with respective tax paying ability of each citizen.
2. Certainty - The rate and amount of duty, time, manner of payment and place of collection should be certain.
3. convenience - such factors should be conducive and convenience to the tax payer on periodical basis and
4. economy - such collection should be economical to both tax payer and collector without affecting the system.

14. Tolkappiyam. Porul. Meipattiyal. 269.

15. K.V.Ramakrishna Rao, "Tali System in Sangam Age", PIHC, New Delhi, 1992, p.192.

16. J.B.O.R.S, III, pp.436-37; Epigraphica Indica, XX, p.71).

17. D.C.Sircar, "An Account of the Fifty-six countries in and on the borders of India", Indian Culture, Vol.VIII, July 1941-June 1942, pp.33-64.

Sangam literature consulted and Abbreviations used:

Nat	= Natrinai
Ing	= Ingurunuru
Kurun	= Kuruntogai
Padit	= Paditruppattu
Pari	= Paripadal
Kali	= Kalittogai
Agam	= Agananuru
Puram	= Purananuru
Tiru	= Triumugatrappadai
Madu	= Maduraikkanchi
Porun	= Porunatrappadai
Nedu	= Nedunalvada
Siru	= Sirupanatrappadai
Kurinchi	= Kurinchippattu
Perum	= Perumanatrappadai
Pattina	= Pattinappalai
Mullai	= Mullaippattu
Malai	= malaipadukadam
Manu	= Manu Smriti
BISS	= Bharatiya Itihasa Sankalana Samiti
PBISS	= Proceedings of Bharatiya Itihasa Sankalana Samiti
PIHC	= Proceedings of Indian History Congress
JRAS	= Journal of Royal Asiatic Society